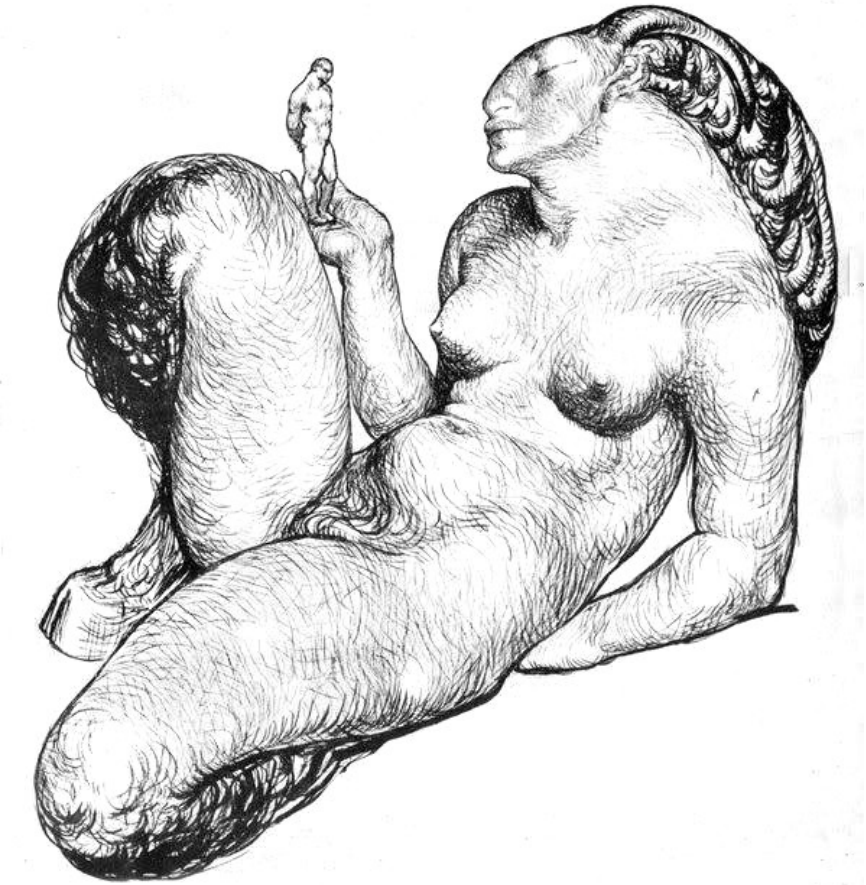
my love is strange



an anthology of eight hundred years of unusual care

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Fonts used are Michiyo Fukaya (title, chapter headings, tiny lady dingbats), and Walleye (body text). LB Lee compiled this in March 2026.

bisclavret

by Marie de France (12th cent.) translation Shoaf (1996)

Since I'm making lais, Bisclavret
Is one I don't want to forget.
In Breton, "Bisclavret"'s the name;
"Garwolf" in Norman means the same.
Long ago you heard the tale told—
And it used to happen, in days of old—
Quite a few men became garwolves,
And set up housekeeping in the woods.
A garwolf is a savage beast,
While the fury's on it, at least:
Eats men, wreaks evil, does no good,
Living and roaming in the deep wood.
Now I'll leave this topic set.
I want to tell you about Bisclavret.

In Brittany there dwelt a lord;
Wondrous praise of him I've heard:
A handsome knight, an able man,
He was, and acted like, a noble man.
His lord the King held him dear,
And so did his neighbors far and near.

He'd married a worthy woman, truly;
Always she acted so beautifully.

He loved her, she him: they loved each other.
But one thing was a bother:
Every week he was lost to her
For three whole days, she didn't know where,
What became of him, what might befall
Him; his people knew nothing at all.
He came home to his house one day,
So joyous he was, happy and gay;
She began to ask him and inquire:
"My lord," she said, "my friend, my dear,
There's just one thing I might care
To ask, if only I might dare—
But I'm afraid that you'll get angry,
And, more than anything, that scares me."
He hugged her when he heard all this,
Drew her close and gave her a kiss.
"My lady," he said, "Ask me now!
Anything you want to know,
If I can, I'll tell you." "Sir,
by my faith, you work my cure.
My lord, I'm in terror every day,
Those days when you've gone away,
My heart is so full of fear,
I'm so afraid I'll lose you, dear—
If I don't get some help, some healing,
I will die soon of what I'm feeling!
Where do you go? Now you must say
What life you live, where do you stay?
You are in love—that's it, I know—
And you do wrong if this is so!"
"My lady," he said, "Please, God above!
I'll suffer great harm if I tell you:
I'll drive you off, right out of love,
And lose my own self if I do."

The lady heard how he refused.

She was not the least amused.
She brought it up again, and often
She would flatter him and cozen
Him to tell her his adventure—
Till, hiding nothing, he told her.
"My lady, I turn bisclavret;
I plunge into that great forest.
In thick woods I like it best.
I live on what prey I can get."
When he'd told her all the story
She asked, inquired one thing more: he
Undressed? Or what did he wear?
"My lady," he said, "I go all bare."
"Where are your clothes? Tell, for God's sake."
"My lady, I won't say this, no;
For if I lost them by this mistake,
From that moment on, I'd know
I'd stay a bisclavret forever;
Nothing could help me, I'd never
Change back till I got them again.
That's why I don't want it known."
"My lord," the lady replied, "It's true
More than all the world I love you.
You should hide nothing from me, nor
Ever doubt I'm loyal in any affair.
That would not seem like true friendship.
How have I ever sinned? What slip
Makes me seem untrustworthy to you?
Do what's right! Now tell me, do!"
She nagged him thus, and thus harassed
Him till he just had to tell, at last.
"My lady," he said, "near that wood,
Where I come home, along that road,
Standing there is an old chapel,
Which often serves me well.
The stone is there, hollow and wide,
Beneath a bush, dug out inside;
I put my clothes there under the bush
Until I can come back to the house."

The lady heard this marvel, this wonder.
In terror she blushed all bright red,
Filled with fear by this adventure.
Often and often passed through her head
Plans to get right out, escape, for
She didn't want ever to share his bed.

A knight in that country there
Who long had loved the lady fair,
Begging her so, praying hard,
Giving generously to win her regard
(She had never loved him before this,
Nor let him think her love was his)—
She sent a messenger to bring
Him to her, and told him everything.

"My friend, my dear," she said, "be glad!
You've been tormented, driven, sad
Wanting what I'll give you today—
No-one will ever say you nay—
I grant you my love and my body, too:
Take me, make me your lover, you!"

He thanks her very gratefully.
He takes her pledge made solemnly—
She swears an oath on the engagement.
Then she told him how her lord went
Away, and what he turned into.
The path he'd always taken to
Enter the forest—this she shows;
She sent him to get his clothes.
Thus was Bisclavret betrayed
And by his own wife waylaid.

Having lost him so often, indeed,
Everyone generally agreed
That he had finally left for good.
He was looked for, inquiries pursued,

But they couldn't find a trace.
Finally they closed the case.
The lady's marriage was celebrated
To the fellow who'd loved and
waited.
So, a whole year, matters rest,
Until the King went hunting one day.
He went straight to the forest
Where the bisclavret used to stay.
When the hounds were loosed and
let
Run, they found the bisclavret.
They chased him always that long
day,
The huntsmen and the coursing dogs,
Till they had him—almost—at bay
And they would have torn him to
rags,
But then he picked out the King
And ran there for mercy. To beg,
He seizes the King's stirrup-ring,
And kisses his foot and leg.
The King sees this, and feels great
fear;
He calls all his companions over.
"My lords," he says, "come, come
here!
Behold this marvel, see this wonder.
How this beast bows down to me!
Its3 sense is human. It begs for mercy.
Drive me those dogs away again,
See that no-one strikes a blow!
This beast understands, feels like a
man.
Let's get going! You're all too slow!
To the beast my peace I'll grant.
Now, no more today will I hunt."

With that, the King turns and goes.
The bisclavret follows him close;
It won't escape, it stays right near.
Losing him is its only fear.
The King leads it back to his castle
keep;
It pleases him, his delight is deep
For he's never seen such a creature.
He's decided it's a marvel of nature,
And treats it as a great treasure.
He tells his people it's his pleasure
For them to take the best of care
Of it; let no-one harm it, or dare
To strike it, for love of the King.
It must be fed well and given drink.
They're all glad to care for and keep
It; every day it goes to sleep
Among the knights, close to the King.
Every man thinks it a precious thing,
For it's so gentle, well-bred, polite,
It never would do what isn't right.
Wherever the King might go
It didn't want to be separated, so
It went along with him constantly.
That it loved him was easy to see.

Now listen to what happened next.
The King was holding court; he'd
asked
That all his barons attend him,
Those who owed their land to him,
To help him hold his high feast-day,
And see him served in a royal way.
That very knight came to the feast,
Well equipped and richly dressed,
Who had married Bisclavret's wife.
He never thought nor reckoned
To find him so close in his life.
He came to the palace; the second
That Bisclavret saw him standing
around,
He made for him with a single
bound,
Bit into him and dragged him off.
He would have treated him very
rough
If the King hadn't called him back
And threatened him with a stick.
He tried to bite him twice before
night.

Many folks were amazed at the sight;
For never had he acted this way
To any man he'd seen, until this day.
All those of the household insist
There must be a reason he's doing this.
He's hurt him, gave him some offense —
For he'd be glad to take vengeance.
This time he lets it drop
Until the feast has broken up
And the lords take leave; each baron
Returns to his home, one by one.
The knight has left, I happen to know,
Among the very first to go,
He whom Bisclavret attacked;
He hates him —not a surprising fact.

Some time later (not very long,
I think, unless I heard it wrong),
The King went riding in the wood,
That courteous King, so wise and good,
That wood where they'd found Bisclavret,
And he came along with him. At
Night, time to retire for the day,
In a country lodging he lay.
Bisclavret's wife knew it; she dressed
Herself in her attractive best,
Next day, to go speak to the King—
Sent him a gift, some costly thing.
When Bisclavret saw her entrance,
No man could have held him back;
He ran like mad to the attack—
Listen now to his fine vengeance:
He tore her nose right off her face.
Could anything be worse than this is?
Now they surround him in that place,

They're ready to cut him in pieces,
When a wise fellow tells the King,
"My Lord," he says, "Hear what I say:
It's with you this beast's been living
And every one of us here today
Has watched him a long time; beside
Him we've traveled far and wide.
He's never before hurt anyone,
Or shown a criminal disposition,
Except to this lady you see here.
by the faith I owe you, it's clear
He holds some grudge or other
Against her and her lord together.
This is the wife of that knight who
Used to be so dear to you,
Who was lost such a long time ago;
What happened to him, we don't know.

Now try this lady with some torture,
And see if she doesn't have more to
Tell you why the beast hates her!
If she knows, make her say it!
Many strange things we see occur
In Brittany, early and late."

With this advice the King agrees.
On the one hand, the knight they seize;
The lady's taken, on the other,
And seriously made to suffer.
From pain just as much as from fear,
She told him her lord's whole affair:
How she'd betrayed him, she said,
And taken away the clothes that he shed,
The adventure he'd told, so she'd know,
What he became and where he'd go.
Since she'd stolen all his linen,
In his lands he'd not been seen;
But she believed—her mind was set—
The beast was indeed Bisclavret.
The King wants the clothes on the spot;
Whether the lady wants to or not
She has them brought back out
And given to the Bisclavret.

They set them down in front of his nose,
But Bisclavret ignores the clothes.
That wise fellow speaks to the King,
Who'd given the other advice, too:
"Sire, you're doing the wrong thing.
He will never make the least
Move to get dressed in front of you
And change from the form of a beast.
This is terrible—you don't know—
Something he's far too ashamed to show.
Have him taken to your own room,
And his lost clothes brought with him;
A good long time, leave him alone;
Then we'll see if he becomes a man."

The King himself took Bisclavret
Inside, and closed all the doors tight;
He returned when the time was done.
He brought along two barons, not one.
They entered the chamber, all three.
On the king's royal bed, they see
Lying fast asleep, the knight.
The king ran to hug him tight;
He kissed him a hundred times that day.
When he catches his breath, he hands
Him back all his fiefs and lands,
And more presents than I will say.

The lady, now, they expell
From that realm, from that time forward.
He goes with her, as well,
For whom she betrayed her lord.
She had plenty of children; grown,
They were, all of them, quite well-known,
by their looks, their facial assembly:
More than one woman of that family
Was born without a nose to blow,
And lived denosed. It's true! It's so!

The adventure you have heard
Is true—don't doubt a single word.
Of Bisclavret they made the lay,
To remember, forever and a day.

Degenderettes banner, 2018

the master-mistress
by Rose O'Neill (1922)

All in the drowse of life I saw a shape,
A lovely monster reared up from the restless rock,
More secret and more loud than other beasts.
It, seeming two in one,
With dreadful beauty doomed.
Folded itself, in chanting like a flood.
I said, "Your name, O Master-mistress?"
But it, answering not.
Folded itself, in chanting like a flood.

Frontispiece to Rose O'Neill's *The Master-Mistress* (1922).

Sonnet xx
by William Shakespeare (1609)

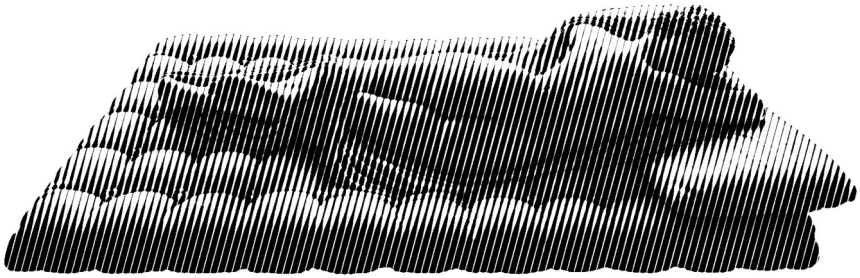
A woman's face with nature's own hand painted
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change as is false women's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated
by adding one thing to my purpose nothing.

But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

night the thirteenth: the ninth fable (Filomena the hermaphrodite)

by Straparola (1550-1555)

The secrets of nature, most gracious ladies, are indeed mighty and beyond counting, nor does there live in all the world a man who by the powers of his intellect is able to realize the character thereof. On this account the thought has come into my mind to relate to you something which happened (for in sooth this is no fable) no great time ago in the city of Salerno. In Salerno, a city of high renown, and one in which handsome women especially abound, there lived a certain gentleman belonging to the house of Porti, the head of a family and the father of one daughter, a damsel in the full flower of her beauty and not yet past the sixteenth year of her age. This maiden, who was called Filomena, found somewhat irksome the pursuit of the many gallants of the city who flocked about her on account of her great beauty and sought to have her to wife. The father, seeing that his daughter was in a position of some danger, and fearing lest some ignominy or other should fall upon her by reason of the provocations she daily received, determined to take her to the convent of San Iorio in the city of Salerno; not indeed with the view of let ting her make formal profession of the monastic life, but in order that the sisters might have charge of her until such time as she should find a husband.



Sleeping Hermaphroditus, 100-500 CE; mattress done by Bernini in 1620

It happened that while this damsel was abiding in the convent she fell a victim to a grave attack of fever, during which she was nursed and tended with the greatest care and diligence. At the outset of her illness certain herbalists came to minister to her cure, and these, with weighty oaths and professions, pledged themselves to bring her back to her for her good health in a very short space of time. But all their efforts were of no avail. Whereupon her father caused to be brought to her divers physicians of great skill and experience, and some old women as well, who promised forthwith to give her a remedy which should work a cure of her malady. In the meantime the fair

and gracious maiden was further afflicted by a grievous swelling of the groin, which grew to the bigness of a large ball. by reason of this ailment she suffered so great pain that she did nought else but groan and lament in piteous wise; so that it seemed as if she were in deed come very near to the end of her days. Her kinsfolk, deeply moved by the wretched lot of the young girl, sent to minister to her surgeons of renown, men highly commended as professors of their art; and some of these, after they had carefully viewed and examined the spot where the swelling was, declared that the root of the herb marsh mallow, well cooked and mixed with the lard of swine, ought to be applied to the place in order to alleviate the pain and the swelling; others prescribed different treatment, while others denied that there would be any use in applying to the patient either this or that of the remedies which had been suggested. On one point they were all agreed, namely, that they must, in any case, cut open the swelling in order to remove therefrom the cause of the pain.

As soon as they had come to this decision they bade summon all the inmates of the convent, as well as divers matrons and kinsfolk of the gracious damsel who was sick. Then one of the aforesaid surgeons, a man who in skill greatly ex celled all his colleagues, having taken his operating knife, made a light incision therewith, and with the greatest dexterity cut through the swelling in the twinkling of an eye, and perforated the skin. And when they looked to see come forth from the wound either blood or putrefaction, lo and behold! nothing of the sort happened—the only result of their operation being the transformation of their patient from a damsel into a young man. Though I am now telling you the sober truth in lieu of a fable, I cannot keep back my laughter. All the nuns fell straightway to weeping with grief, not indeed because of the wound which had been inflicted upon the damsel, or because of the distemper she had suffered, but rather on their own account, seeing that they would vastly have preferred that this event, which came to pass openly, should have happened in secret and without the knowledge of anyone except themselves. After what had occurred, for the sake of their good name they must needs send the damsel at once forth from the convent, whereas they would dearly have loved now to keep her amongst themselves. The physicians who were standing by could do nought else but laugh, and thus in a trice the damsel, restored to health, became both man and woman. Now I, forsooth, have told you in place of something fictitious, something which is true—something, moreover, which I can speak of from the testimony of mine own eyes, forasmuch as I saw her after the event described above clad as a man, she partaking the while of the nature both of the one sex and of the other.

en una noche oscura

by San Juan de la Cruz (1577-1579)
translated by Eric Rosenbloom (1999)

On a dark night,
Kindled in love with yearnings
—oh, happy chance!—
I went forth without being observed,
My house being now at rest.

In darkness and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised
—oh, happy chance!—
In darkness and in concealment,
My house being now at rest.

In the happy night,
In secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught,
Without light or guide,
save that which burned in my heart.

This light guided me
More surely than the light of
noonday
To the place where he
(well I knew who!) was awaiting me
— A place where none appeared.

Oh, night that guided me,
Oh, night more lovely than the
dawn,
Oh, night that joined
Beloved with lover,
Lover transformed in the Beloved!

Upon my flowery breast,
Kept wholly for himself alone,
There he stayed sleeping,
and I caressed him,
And the fanning of the cedars made a
breeze.

The breeze blew from the turret
As I parted his locks;
With his gentle hand
Hard on my neck,
And all my senses suspended.

I lost myself,
I lay my face against my love,
Everything stopped,
My cares were left
Between the lilies all forgotten.

soul's desire

by Rabia Clarke (1988)

No earthly love have I,
No caresses or welcoming arms.
"Aren't you lonely?" friends ask,
Seeing my solitude.

How does one speak of
The caresses of the Beloved?
The ecstasy of his breath
Merged with mine,
His touch pulsing in my spine,
His fire consuming my heart,
His song ever moving
In my mind.

No distance separates us,
Time and space stand still,
My yearning is our yearning,
Where went "I"?

Amid the flames I stand,
Clothed in golden fire.
Void and dark my center,
Pulsing, glowing outside.

No edges nor shape have I,
An endlessly burning, giving
light.
Peace in the darkness,
Ecstasy of radiation,
Fulfillment of my soul's desire.

The Abduction of Psyche, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1895)

Sonnet xxvii
by William Shakespeare (1609)

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

Waiting, by George du Maurier (illustration from *Peter Ibbetson*, 1891)

together
by Sarah Orne Jewett (1875)

I wonder if you really send
These dreams of you that come and go!
I like to say, "She thought of me,
And I have known it." Is it so?

Though other friends walk by your side.
Yet sometimes it must surely be,
They wonder where your thoughts have gone,
Because I have you here with me.

And when the busy day is done
And work is ended, voices cease,
When every one has said good night,
In fading firelight then in peace

I idly rest: you come to me,—
Your dear love holds me close to you.
If I could see you face to face
It would not be more sweet and true;

I do not hear the words you speak,
Nor touch your hands, nor see your eyes:
Yet, far away the flowers may grow
From whence to me the fragrance flies;

And so, across the empty miles
Light from my star shines. Is it, dear,
Your love has never gone away?
I said farewell and—kept you here.

the dream baby
by Olivia Howard Dunbar (1904)

"It will seem a little like dying, won't it?" grimly commented Miss Agatha Holt, pausing to contemplate, as though for the first time, her immediate future.

Miss Emily, in the opposite corner of the fragrant little sitting-room, that was unacquainted with other disorder than the present quite legitimate one of packing, was wrapping with delicately conscientious fingers certain precious bits of china. The windows were open, and there surged gently in a relaxed June atmosphere. The draperies at doors and windows stirred sleepily.

"Rather more like heaven, Agatha," amended Miss Emily, in a thin, girlish voice that was not so incongruous, after all, with the unmistakable gray hands in her brown hair. It was not unlikely that this lovable lady would remain an ingénue to the brink of senility. Then something in Miss Agatha's expression made her add: " Now, if you're going to regret it, dear, we won't 'retire' at all. It's not too late. Perhaps we might not get together as large a school next year, but—"

"Nonsense!" brusquely interrupted the other, accelerating the executive precision of her packing. "I want nothing of the sort. There's no sweeter sorrow than parting with text-books and kindergarten cubes. Then I haven't the anguish of a schoolroom full of shorn friendships, as you know. dear. Oh no, I've never been 'dear teacher'! It isn't that. But to me, because I am well and strong, there is, perversely enough, something like humiliation in confessing, at, fifty-three, that one has hung up one's tools for good. Why, one almost despises oneself!"

"I don't, Agatha," protested Miss Emily, putting on her glasses for a closer study of Miss Agatha's mood.

"I know; it's because you're fortunate enough to be consistently feminine. You appreciate that we are about to enter upon a dignified and harmonious spinsterly existence, whose pleasures we have amply earned. Well, so do I, and I naturally want to live up to my opportunities. Only, I have rough corners, you know, Emily, and I don't doubt you'll feel them sharper than ever, now."

"But that's something to be proud of, my dear," Emily gently chirped. "Most people's corners are worn smooth in the schoolroom."

"Poor darling!" Where her idol was concerned. Miss Agatha's pity overflowed at a word. "They did sandpaper you, the little wretches! You always were absurdly soft, Emily, and the schoolroom is no place for softness. I shall never become reconciled to your having missed your proper background, which, as I've told you often enough, would have been fireside domesticity. Don't talk to me of destiny!"

But indeed Miss Emily appeared to have no wish to. Her lack of zest in a discussion of this order was always indicated by some sweet irrelevance. “Agatha, have we any more tissue - paper?" served the purpose at this point.

For a week past, the atmosphere in the little flat had been singularly vibrant; the week, that is, since school had closed—with a definite, final snap, this time—and preparations for the summer flitting had begun. These latter were based, it is true, on an exaggerated estimate of the ravages that may be wrought in a summer by the moth and rust that do corrupt domestic treasures; but any less stalwart battery of defence would have failed to accommodate the ladies' delicately balanced consciences to the enjoyment of their approaching summer in Gloucester, with its delights, familiar now these many years, of wandering over wind-swept moors, intelligently admiring sunsets and storms, reading up neglected volumes of history and experiencing contact with the sublimated cultivation of Massachusetts. The “retiring” from their profession, the flurry of on unaccustomed concern with matters of finance, the ritualistic elaboration of their packing,—these had, in combination, imparted to the two ladies an extraordinary state of tension, an unnatural aliveness to what was going on about them. Twelfth Street, upon which they had looked daily for years, had, as Miss Agatha said, a final ” look, though they were certainly returning in the autumn. And their friends bade them farewell for the summer —though this, again, was but their distorted perception of it—as though the two ladies were already remote from the familiar currents. What more natural, under these stimulating circumstances, than that Miss Agatha should have been driven, from mere “ nerves,” to frequent caustic comments? — or that Miss Emily should have timidly confessed that only twice before within her memory had she been so emotionally torn up by the roots:—once, when she had secured her first position as teacher, and again, when she and Agatha had made their first trip to Europe, bent on a decorous tour of the English cathedral towns.

For twenty-five years, it should be understood, this delightful pair had worked side by side. For fifteen years a certain door had borne the legend: “Miss Holt and Miss Vanderkoep: Classes for Young Children.” As “Miss-Holt-and-Miss-Vanderkoep” they were, indeed, invariably known. Socially or professionally, the concept of them wa3 single rather than dual. When, at half past eight in the morning, two persons of authority would approach the schoolroom, one slight, smiling, tranquil, one taller, breezier, and, to the infant mind, infinitely more terrible and “sarcastic”—appalling characteristic in a teacher!—those members of the “classes for young children” who were lingering reticently in the background, would exchange the unnecessary observation, “Here come Miss-Holt-and-Miss-Vanderkoep!” When the mothers of these very young persons wished to confer, as it were, a social nod upon the accomplished instructors, phrases of affectionate condescension would invite "My-dear-Miss-Holt-and-Miss-Vanderkoep.” To their friends, to their butcher, to their clergyman, to their janitor, they were, always, “Miss-Holt-and-Miss-

Vanderkoep." So, quite naturally, the devoted pair, though by no menus lacking in individuality, had long ceased to think of themselves as divisible, and it seemed probable they would continue indefinitely, "Miss-Holt-and-Miss-Vanderkoep."

Once in serene possession of tho recuperative joys upon which they had so properly counted, the monumental fact of their "retirement" acquired a certain agreeable dimness. There were moments when Miss Agatha and Miss Emily almost forgot that they had attained the parting of the ways,—that chill, academic routine lay behind, and graceful and improving leisure lay before. It was incredible that it should have been be disconcerting, after years of longing, to be brought face to face, at last, with the opportunity for graceful and improving leisure!

Invariably, heretofore, the two ladies had returned to town on the fifteenth of September, a date that is widely conceded to be appropriate and dignified. This year, when the eighth of September came, Miss Agatha asked, a little nervously, "Have you begun to pack yet, dear?"

Miss Emily tried to pretend she did not understand.

"My dear, we've always gone back on the fifteenth. I—wrote Hotchkiss we were coming then. He asked, you know, about the floors."

"I've always fancied it must be wonderful here in October," said Miss Emily, sentimentally. "You know we've so often wished—"

"I know." Miss Agatha appeared to be reflecting. "To me, I confess, it seems a little absurd to stay over an extra six weeks simply for the idle consideration of landscape. Still, Emily, if you really wish to— And what in the world did we 'retire' for if not to do exactly as we please?"

Miss Emily paused in her turn. "Well, then," she said, with the air of one making an original observation, "let us go on the fifteenth. Will you see about the stateroom, Agatha?"

The economical decision of the previous June to do without a maid was a thousand times mentally applauded by Miss Agatha, who was quite ready to confess to herself that she would otherwise have found tho autumn days uncomfortably long; and who, as it was, quite immoderately indulged herself in the riotous pastime of sweeping the rooms. All the drudgery, indeed, of the new regimen was firmly appropriated by Miss Agatha, and for two reasons. It helped, she thought, to justify an existence that now seemed sadly purposeless; and it secured her the happiness of seeing Emily's slender, ladylike hands engaged in the lighter and showier of the domestic tasks. Emily in conjunction with the breakfast china or the linen-closet was a spectacle peculiarly appropriate and charming; while at a glimpse of Emily preparing a cake, fond-hearted Miss Agatha could have indulged, with all the zest in the world, in just some such affectionate panegyric as pretty Ruth Pinch evoked, stirring together her immortal pudding.

In proportion as Miss Agatha felt the dreariness of exclusion from blackboards and chalk, primers and basket-weaving, and the sound of sweet,

unreasonable little voices, she characteristically strove to keep a knowledge of her feeling from Miss Emily. It came about that certain topics were never mentioned between them. Agatha, who had always taken the lead, had the air of protecting the younger woman from—neither of them could have told what. Certainly not from this charming, unfettered life they had so long yearned for! Meanwhile, Agatha so tenderly feared that her friend suffered from conditions she herself had brought about that she did not even dare ask the questions that might have ended her suspense.

One day poor Agatha's clouded conscience lightened. “Emily darling,” she exclaimed, "shouldn't you like to be at home to some of the children on Wednesday afternoons? It would please them, you know, they're so fond of you.”

“Why, Agatha!”

“Should you like it?”

“I think it would he perfectly lovely,” gushed Miss Emily, in all sincerity.

The success of the first of these cheerful if a trifle tumultuous occasions was complete. Agatha, who, after a brief welcome of the guests, had retired to the kitchen, ostensibly in the interests of domestic affairs, smiled and frowned alternately. “Poor Emily!” she anxiously commented. “She's happier with those children than she has been in six months. Poor dear!”

At breakfast, a few mornings later. Miss Agatha was unusually silent. “I've something very odd to tell you. Emily,” she remarked at last. "I dreamed of you last night.”

“Oh dear!” Miss Emily, hidden away in her bureau drawers, kept a “dream-book,” and she well knew, from trustful consultation, just how direfully portentous it is to dream of—

“Oh, but this was a delightful dream,” Miss Agatha hastened to assure her. "It was a dream of you and a baby. You've always had a Madonna look, you know, Emily, but there you were all Madonna. I can see the little thing now with its sensitive wee face—it wasn't more than six months old—and a patrician dot of a nose and mysterious blue eyes. And what was most curious was that you seemed to exercise some uncanny maternal spell over it; for when it fretted you said ”—Miss Agatha paused and smiled to herself at the tender absurdity of the recollection—“you said, 'Hush, Vanderkoep!'—and he hushed.”

“Vanderkoep!" echoed Miss Emily. “And I always thought it would be such a good name for a boy. But, Agatha, what was the rest of it?”

“There was nothing else. Or if there was, I failed to realize it. Just you and Vanderkoep projected against space. There may, of course, have been—some other members of tho family, but I didn't see them.”

“How curious,” gently commented Miss Emily, who, held in the thrall of this unusual narrative, had quite forgotten to drink her coffee. “And he was pretty?”

“Altogether charming. Not the plump Cupid type. One could fancy him developing into something really distinguished. Oh, I should know him

anywhere, it was all so startlingly vivid. It seemed almost," she went on, with an effort to be quite explicit, "like a supernatural realization of what might have been, of what should have been. With such a very slightly different turn of
the wheel, Emily,— Ah, how we all like to ponder on the 'ifs'!"

Miss Emily reflected a little. "How soft and sweet they are, aren't they?" she said, tenderly. "Babies, I mean."

"Very," agreed Miss Agatha.

Again and again through the day Agatha found her friend regarding her with a kind of silent eagerness. And, though affecting not to notice this, she too
discovered, a little to her discomfort, that the impression of her singular dream was strangely slow to fade.

It was with a greatly disquieted air that she came to breakfast the next morning.

"Did you sleep well, dear?" inquired Miss Emily, with u new timidity.

"Not in the least well. A succession of nightmares. And when I've been dieting, too. It's preposterous!"

"Why didn't you call me?"

"It's precisely what I did. and frantically, in my sleep. I have passed my night, Emily, in a mad chase after that baby of yours, that Vanderkoep. If you will believe me, he fell down-stairs before my very eyes!"

"Oh, Agatha!"

"But I picked him up, and when I found he wasn't killed I put him in a hot bath as a restorative. However, he almost drowned himself, for he was so smooth and slippery I couldn't hold him. Emily, I must ask you to give me another cup of coffee and to make it strong. I feel a literal fatigue."

"And there was no one with him?"

"You reappeared at last, and when you took him in your arms you both looked so pretty I couldn't scold either of you!"

"Was he good when I took him?" asked Miss Emily, as if she were sure of the answer.

"Perfectly. Did I tell you, Emily, that the child has beautiful eyes? And one of his dimples corresponds with that one of yours that you ought to have outgrown long ago!"

"What kind of sounds does he make?"

"Why, something like this,"—Miss Agatha obligingly made a desperate endeavor to imitate the formless gurgles of the dream-baby.

"Of course," beamed Miss Emily, in complete approval. "How dear he will be when he talks," she added, unconsciously.

Agatha looked up in wonder. Nor did her later reflections on this conversation prove reassuring.

Meanwhile, the dream-baby maintained in the family interests a prominence altogether unaccountable. Peculiarly susceptible to his shadowy

fascination. Miss Emily expressed her affectionate absorption by the most significant of omissions. For the first time in her life, she neglected her embroidery, and it became her inexplicable habit to sit idle, almost motionless, through several hours. Or, adroitly succeeding in the introduction of Yanderkoep as a subject of conversation, she would devote herself to a strained effort to transfer from Miss Agatha's mental vision to her own every detail of the tantalizing image.

At close intervals Miss Agatha—oh, quite in spite of herself! for she had vowed that she would never dream of Vanderkoep again, and had forsworn her nightly glass of milk, lest that modest nutriment be responsible— had further visions of the engaging phantom who, in his peculiar and insubstantial fashion, had made himself so integral a part of the little family. And with each dream her perception of him became more consistently rational; there were no lurid escapes from sudden deaths in these later visions. And while, actually, Miss Agatha had never conspicuously succeeded in expressing her sympathy with children, having been, indeed, through all her pedagogical experience, rather hopelessly at odds with them, with Vanderkoep she got on a singularly satisfactory footing. He would, she lamented, never sit in her lap with the same look of rapturous content that he wore while held in Emily's tenderly maternal embrace. But his amiable, if picturesquely incomplete remarks showed that there were no reservations in his affection; and the most harmonious understanding pervaded those intangible domestic scenes where Emily and the baby, an altogether radiant picture, would suffer Agatha to sit by, their happy and admiring complement.

Secretly, however, the fact that the dreams became increasingly unlike dreams was a matter of serious concern to Miss Agatha, that most sensible and clear-headed of women, that substantial compound of keen humor and broad common sense! Dreams with the magnificent incoherence of ordinary, familiar dreamland, she could have tolerated; but visions that dared again and again to shape themselves into so audacious—and, yes, so bewitching!—a semblance of reality, beset her with vague terrors. She had become far too expert in the uncanny business for her sadly disturbed peace of mind.

It might have been expected that Vanderkoep's progress in life would be by unnatural fits and starts, something after the manner of the immortal Alice. Quite on the contrary, his development kept pace with the calendar; and his accomplishments, as the months went by, corresponded precisely with the measure of his existence. He crept, sat erect, and otherwise asserted himself at, in each ease, the normal period. It is true that neither of the two ladies could have divined this gratifying fact; but having formed the habit of jotting down Vanderkoep's exploits in an ornate book designed for that purpose, and blushingly bought by Miss Emily at a department store, they discovered, on comparing these notes with the information given each month in *Baby and his Ways*, the magazine for which Miss Emily had promptly subscribed, that there was absolutely nothing to criticise in the dream-baby's development. "Though

what we should do about it, if there was. Heaven only knows!" Miss Agatha had
remarked in a candid outburst that quite wounded sensitive Miss Emily.

One day Agatha came in from a meeting of the "Municipal Government Club" which she had joined on the assurance of its president that it would "enrich her life," and found Emily sedulously erasing the evidence of tears. Suspicion flew like an arrow and hit the mark.

"I suppose it's that baby again," groaned Agatha.

"He hasn't done anything," sobbed Emily, in superfluous defence of the dream-baby. "I suppose it's his not really belonging to me that I mind so much. And then, I might as well tell you, Agatha, that the worst of it is —that nobody ever had a baby before without being able to make clothes for it!" Here the poor lady's grief quite overcame her.

"Hush, hush, dear!"

"I want to sew him a little dross more than I want anything, Agatha! And you know how beautifully I could make it. I have thought how I should have it out square, so as to show the exquisite back of his neck. You were telling me yesterday how I loved to kiss him there... Agatha!"—Emily was very timid —"what should you think if I bought. —well, perhaps not a dress, but some flannel and made him a little jacket, just to please myself?"

"Emily, I beg of you never to talk in this way again. I blame myself beyond all telling. Please, dear, let us try to forget it all!"

The sobbing figure seemed not to hear. "Agatha," she said, "I want you to promise me something,—that you will never keep from me anything in regard to Vanderkoep. It is my right to know everything and at once. So you must not only tell me, but it must be immediately, the next morning— whatever, whatever, it may be."

Agatha, whose affection for her friend was ever her line of least resistance, succumbed.

"Why, yes, dear, I promise," she agreed, nervously. "Let me make you some tea."

Within the few months of Venderkoep's spectral existence there had at times threatened to appear—though the admission could not hare been wrung from either of tho two friends—a narrow rift within the exquisitely close tissue of their intimacy. The lack was perhaps not so much of understanding as of sincerity, of outspokenness, between them; and Miss Agatha, who suffered excruciatingly from the knowledge of this, was also painfully aware of the cause. Quite unconsciously, Emily was jealous of her more intimate knowledge of Vanderkoep. And why, thought the unhappy Agatha, should she not be? How
grotesquely cruel it was that Emily should always be obliged to learn at second hand of Vanderkoep's countless physical perfections and delicious infant waywardnesses! that she should be denied the mirrored joy of once holding her own dream-baby in her arms! It was so simple a thing to dream—why

might not poor dear Emily yield herself to at least one radiant delusion?

Illustration from *the Dream Baby* by John Hardy (Harper's Bazar, 1904)

Early in May, according to the arithmetic of Miss Agatha's visions, Vanderkoep attained the dignity of his first anniversary. Truthful and conscientious to a fault, she communicated the report of this festival, though with an evident unwillingness.

"We will let the china wait a little," said Miss Emily, with determination. "Sit down and tell me all about it. What did he say?"

"He said ' mamma,'" replied Miss Agatha, with the tender patience of one teaching the blind, "and hugged you with that happy little scream of his."

Miss Emily nodded.

"And then he laughed mischievously, showing all his cunning little teeth."

"Five of them," interjected Miss Emily, accurately.

"And when I tried to find out what pleased him so much, I saw that he was holding tightly under his arm a toy elephant—"

"Where had he gotten it?"

"Why, it was one of his birthday presents from you. I think you must have given him a dozen. One was a fine bay horse, harnessed into a cart, with real harness and all that. It seemed to delight him particularly."

"Boys always love horses so," said Miss Emily, wisely.

"And though I tried to make him come to me, he wouldn't. He stayed with you and cuddled."

Thus was the narrative continued and pieced out and refitted and every least detail adjusted to its place. At the close of which Miss Emily put on her glasses and sat down at her desk to enter faithfully into the book devoted to Vanderkoep the full and unabridged history of his first birthday.

A few days later the first prolonged heat ware swept blightingly over the city.

"I think we cannot get away too soon. Emily," observed Miss Agatha. "How
fortunate it is we haven't to wait till June!"

Miss Emily said nothing.

"What do you think, my dear?" pursued Miss Agatha.

"I suppose I might as well say, now," said Miss Emily, "that I think we cannot go out of town this summer."

"But why?"

"Because of Vanderkoep," Miss Emily come out flatly.

"Well?"

"His very existence is exclusively associated with our rooms here. Do you feel confident, Agatha, that if we went away and interrupted our psychic connection with these surroundings—I hardly know how to put it—"

"I know I should dream of Vanderkoep anywhere," declared Miss Agatha, wearily.

"But how do you know? Have you ever been able to control—"

"No," confessed Miss Agatha.

"And yet you would venture—"

"It would make you unhappy, would it not, Emily, to go away?" interrupted Miss Agatha, to whom these discussions were painful, she could not tell why. "Very well, then, we will stay. I suppose we would better have a maid in for the summer."

So, through the listless warmth of May, the determined heat of June, and the relentless blaze of July, the two ladies lingered on in the little flat in Twelfth Street. There was little enough to interest or stimulate. Existence itself seemed a perfunctory and in no way desirable affair. The two ladies availed themselves to the fullest of their library subscription, corresponded with friends spending
the summer in Europe—and talked of Vanderkoep. Miss Agatha proved herself of heroic stuff by suppressing her almost intolerable longing for cool air and the smell of the sea; Miss Emily suffered the heat and discomfort in significant silence.

During the first week of August came the crisis of the summer's feverish violence. The ominous stillness associated with extreme heat pervaded places where hitherto one had been conscious of nothing but noise. The torrid, throbbing nights were less to be borne than the burning days; sleep, except in snatches, was impossible. From the whole stricken city seemed to rise continuous, unlovely exhalations of sickness, suffering, death.

Miss Emily's never too robust strength yielded to the cruel heat, and for days Miss Agatha nursed her faithfully. During one feverish evening, in particular, when no night coolness came to bring relief, Miss Agatha spent all her strength in the effort to gain a little comfort for her friend. At midnight, exhausted, she lay down without undressing in her own room and slept till dawn. When she awoke, it was with a cry. Miss Emily, lightly dozing in the next room, heard it.

"What is it, Agatha dear?" she asked. Receiving no answer, she called again, then went into Agatha's room. Her friend was sitting upright with a

curious expression on her tired face.

An almost supernatural intuition directed Miss Emily's challenge, "You have been dreaming of Vanderkoep!"

"I am not myself, Emily." Miss Agatha began to talk very fast. "It's the heat. It muddles one's head so. I'm really not responsible. I'm not, indeed. Don't talk of it, Emily. Let us wait till another time."

"I know," said Mies Emily. "You need not tell me. He's dead. My baby's dead." She went and stood by the window and looked vaguely out. "What killed him?" She turned sharply to Miss Agatha.

"Emily, I feel like a murderer!" she broke out. "Don't, don't!"

"What killed him?" persisted Miss Emily, in a hard voice.

"Darling—he died from a fever. I think it must have been the heat. We did everything for him. He did not seem to suffer, Emily!"

Miss Emily said nothing, but continued to stand by the window. Her back was rigid. She wrung her hands incessantly.

"Emily," begged Miss Agatha, clasping her about the shoulders, "you must not suffer so. It is not too late. Listen, dear,—you must wait until I can get a strong sleeping-powder from the drug-store. Then I shall take it and let it put me to sleep, and I shall dream—of course I shall. I shall dream him back again. I know, Emily, that this was not a true dream. You see, dear, the heat and all!"

"And could that comfort me—that you should dream a lying dream? What are you doing to me, Agatha? Why should you want to lie to me, now, when my baby's dead?"

Outside, in the street, there was the first stir of day. Miss Emily, ignoring her friend's entreaties, hurriedly dressed herself, tied a veil neatly over her hat and buttoned her cotton gloves. Then, still in silence, she went to the outer door and turned the knob.

"Emily!" cried the agonized Miss Agatha, "where are you going?"

Miss Emily paused a moment. "Why, I am going," she said, steadily, "to get some flowers for my baby."

the curate's friend
by E. M. Forster (1912)

It is uncertain how the Faun came to be in Wiltshire. Perhaps he came over with the Roman legionaries to live with his friends in camp, talking to them of Lucretius, or Garganus or of the slopes of Etna; they in the joy of their recall forgot to take him on board, and he wept in exile; but at last he found that our hills also understood his sorrows, and rejoiced when he was happy. Or, perhaps he came to be there because he had been there always. There is nothing particularly classical about a faun: it is only that the Greeks and Italians have ever had the sharpest eyes. You will find him in the "Tempest" and the "Benedicite;" and any country which has beech clumps and sloping grass and very clear streams may reasonably produce him.

How I came to see him is a more difficult question. For to see him there is required a certain quality, for which truthfulness is too cold a name and animal spirits too coarse a one, and he alone knows how this quality came to be in me. No man has the right to call himself a fool, but I may say that I then presented the perfect semblance of one. I was facetious without humour and serious without conviction. Every Sunday I would speak to my rural parishioners about the other world in the tone of one who has been behind the scenes, or I would explain to them the errors of the Pelagians, or I would warn them against hurrying from one dissipation to another. Every Tuesday I gave what I called "straight talks to my lads"—talks which led straight past anything awkward. And every Thursday I addressed the Mothers' Union on the duties of wives or widows, and gave them practical hints on the management of a family of ten.

I took myself in, and for a time I certainly took in Emily. I have never known a girl attend so carefully to my sermons, or laugh so heartily at my jokes. It is no wonder that I became engaged. She has made an excellent wife, freely correcting her husband's absurdities, but allowing no one else to breathe a word against them; able to talk about the sub-conscious self in the drawing-room, and yet have an ear for the children crying in the nursery, or the plates breaking in the scullery. An excellent wife—better than I ever imagined. But she has not married me.

Had we stopped indoors that afternoon nothing would have happened. It was all owing to Emily's mother, who insisted on our tea-ing out. Opposite the village, across the stream, was a small chalk down, crowned by a beech copse, and a few Roman earth-works. (I lectured very vividly on those earthworks: they have since proved to be Saxon.) Hither did I drag up a tea-basket and a heavy rug for Emily's mother, while Emily and a little friend went on in front. The little friend—who has played all through a much less important part than

he supposes—was a pleasant youth, full of intelligence and poetry, especially of what he called the poetry of earth. He longed to wrest earth's secret from her, and I have seen him press his face passionately into the grass, even when he has believed himself to be alone. Emily was at that time full of vague aspirations, and, though I should have preferred them all to centre in me, yet it seemed unreasonable to deny her such other opportunities for self-culture as the neighbourhood provided.

It was then my habit, on reaching the top of any eminence, to exclaim facetiously "And who will stand on either hand and keep the bridge with me?" at the same moment violently agitating my arms or casting my wide-awake eyes at an imaginary foe. Emily and the friend received my sally as usual, nor could I detect any insincerity in their mirth. Yet I was convinced that some one was present who did not think I had been funny, and any public speaker will understand my growing uneasiness.

I was somewhat cheered by Emily's mother, who puffed up exclaiming, "Kind Harry, to carry the things! What should we do without you, even now! Oh, what a view! Can you see the dear Cathedral? No. Too hazy. Now I'm going to sit right on the rug." She smiled mysteriously. "The downs in September, you know."

We gave some perfunctory admiration to the landscape, which is indeed only beautiful to those who admire land, and to them perhaps the most beautiful in England. For here is the body of the great chalk spider who straddles over our island—whose legs are the south downs and the north downs and the Chilterns, and the tips of whose toes poke out at Cromer and Dover. He is a clean creature, who grows as few trees as he can, and those few in tidy clumps, and he loves to be tickled by quickly flowing streams. He is pimpled all over with earth-works, for from the beginning of time men have fought for the privilege of standing on him, and the oldest of our temples is built upon his back.

But in those days I liked my country snug and pretty, full of gentlemen's residences and shady bowers and people who touch their hats. The great sombre expanses on which one may walk for miles and hardly shift a landmark or meet a genteel person were still intolerable to me. I turned away as soon as propriety allowed and said "And may I now prepare the cup that cheers?"

Emily's mother replied: "Kind man, to help me. I always do say that tea out is worth the extra effort. I wish we led simpler lives." We agreed with her. I spread out the food. "Won't the kettle stand? Oh, but make it stand." I did so. There was a little cry, faint but distinct, as of something in pain.

"How silent it all is up here!" said Emily.

I dropped a lighted match on the grass, and again I heard the little cry.

"What is that?" I asked.

"I only said it was so silent," said Emily.

"Silent, indeed," echoed the little friend.

Silent! the place was full of noises. If the match had fallen in a drawing-room it could not have been worse, and the loudest noise came from beside Emily herself. I had exactly the sensation of going to a great party, of waiting to be announced in the echoing hall, where I could hear the voices of the guests, but could not yet see their faces. It is a nervous moment for a self-conscious man, especially if all the voices should be strange to him, and he has never met his host.

"My dear Harry!" said the elder lady, "never mind about that match. That'll smoulder away and harm no one. Tea-ee-ee! I always say—and you will find Emily the same—that as the magic hour of five approaches, no matter how good a lunch, one begins to feel a sort of——"

Now the Faun is of the kind who capers upon the Neo-Attic reliefs, and if you do not notice his ears or see his tail, you take him for a man and are horrified.

"Bathing!" I cried wildly. "Such a thing for our village lads, but I quite agree—more supervision—I blame myself. Go away, bad boy, go away!"

"What will he think of next!" said Emily, while the creature beside her stood up and beckoned to me. I advanced struggling and gesticulating with tiny steps and horrified cries, exorcising the apparition with my hat. Not otherwise had I advanced the day before, when Emily's nieces showed me their guinea pigs. And by no less hearty laughter was I greeted now. Until the strange fingers closed upon me, I still thought that here was one of my parishioners and did not cease to exclaim, "Let me go, naughty boy, let go!" And Emily's mother, believing herself to have detected the joke, replied, "Well I must confess they are naughty boys and reach one even on the rug: the downs in September, as I said before."

Here I caught sight of the tail, uttered a wild shriek and fled into the beech copse behind.

"Harry would have been a born actor," said Emily's mother as I left them.

I realized that a great crisis in my life was approaching, and that if I failed in it I might permanently lose my self-esteem. Already in the wood I was troubled by a multitude of voices—the voices of the hill beneath me, of the trees over my head, of the very insects in the bark of the tree. I could even hear the stream licking little pieces out of the meadows, and the meadows dreamily protesting. Above the din—which is no louder than the flight of a bee—rose the Faun's voice saying, "Dear priest, be placid, be placid: why are you frightened?"

"I am not frightened," said I—and indeed I was not. "But I am grieved: you have disgraced me in the presence of ladies."

"No one else has seen me," he said, smiling idly. "The women have tight boots and the man has long hair. Those kinds never see. For years I have only spoken to children, and they lose sight of me as soon as they grow up. But you will not be able to lose sight of me, and until you die you will be my friend. Now I begin to make you happy: lie upon your back or run races, or climb trees, or shall I get you blackberries, or harebells, or wives——"

Pan and Daphnis, ~100 CE.

In a terrible voice I said to him, "Get thee behind me!" He got behind me. "Once for all," I continued, "let me tell you that it is vain to tempt one whose happiness consists in giving happiness to others."

"I cannot understand you," he said ruefully. "What is to tempt?"

"Poor woodland creature!" said I, turning round. "How could you understand? It was idle of me to chide you. It is not in your little nature to comprehend a life of self-denial. Ah! if only I could reach you!"

"You have reached him," said the hill.

"If only I could touch you!"

"You have touched him," said the hill.

"But I will never leave you," burst out the Faun. "I will sweep out your shrine for you, I will accompany you to the meetings of matrons. I will enrich you at the bazaars."

I shook my head. "For these things I care not at all. And indeed I was minded to reject your offer of service altogether. There I was wrong. You shall help me—you shall help me to make others happy."

"Dear priest, what a curious life! People whom I have never seen—people who cannot see me—why should I make them happy?"

"My poor lad—perhaps in time you will learn why. Now begone: commence. On this very hill sits a young lady for whom I have a high regard. Commence with her. Aha! your face falls. I thought as much. You cannot do anything. Here is the conclusion of the whole matter!"

"I can make her happy," he replied, "if you order me; and when I have done so, perhaps you will trust me more."

Emily's mother had started home, but Emily and the little friend still sat beside the tea-things—she in her white piqué dress and biscuit straw, he in his rough but well-cut summer suit. The great pagan figure of the Faun towered insolently above them.

The friend was saying, "And have you never felt the appalling loneliness of a crowd?"

"All that," replied Emily, "have I felt, and very much more—"

Then the Faun laid his hands upon them. They, who had only intended a little cultured flirtation, resisted him as long as they could, but were gradually urged into each other's arms, and embraced with passion.

"Miscreant!" I shouted, bursting from the wood. "You have betrayed me."

"I know it: I care not," cried the little friend. "Stand aside. You are in the presence of that which you do not understand. In the great solitude we have found ourselves at last."

"Remove your accursed hands!" I shrieked to the Faun.

He obeyed and the little friend continued more calmly: "It is idle to chide. What should you know, poor clerical creature, of the mystery of love of the eternal man and the eternal woman, of the self-effectuation of a soul?"

"That is true," said Emily angrily. "Harry, you would never have made me happy. I shall treat you as a friend, but how could I give myself to a man who

makes such silly jokes? When you played the buffoon at tea, your hour was sealed. I must be treated seriously: I must see infinities broadening around me as I rise. You may not approve of it, but so I am. In the great solitude I have found myself at last."

"Wretched girl!" I cried. "Great solitude! O pair of helpless puppets——"

The little friend began to lead Emily away, but I heard her whisper to him: "Dear, we can't possibly leave the basket for Harry after this: and mother's rug; do you mind having that in the other hand?"

So they departed and I flung myself upon the ground with every appearance of despair.

"Does he cry?" said the Faun.

"He does not cry," answered the hill. "His eyes are as dry as pebbles."

My tormentor made me look at him. "I see happiness at the bottom of your heart," said he.

"I trust I have my secret springs," I answered stiffly. And then I prepared a scathing denunciation, but of all the words I might have said, I only said one and it began with "D."

He gave a joyful cry, "Oh, now you really belong to us. To the end of your life you will swear when you are cross and laugh when you are happy. Now laugh!"

There was a great silence. All nature stood waiting, while a curate tried to conceal his thoughts not only from nature but from himself. I thought of my injured pride, of my baffled unselfishness, of Emily, whom I was losing through no fault of her own, of the little friend, who just then slipped beneath the heavy tea basket, and that decided me, and I laughed.

That evening, for the first time, I heard the chalk downs singing to each other across the valleys, as they often do when the air is quiet and they have had a comfortable day. From my study window I could see the sunlit figure of the Faun, sitting before the beech copse as a man sits before his house. And as night came on I knew for certain that not only was he asleep, but that the hills and woods were asleep also. The stream, of course, never slept, any more than it ever freezes. Indeed, the hour of darkness is really the hour of water, which has been somewhat stifled all day by the great pulsings of the land. That is why you can feel it and hear it from a greater distance in the night, and why a bath after sundown is most wonderful.

The joy of that first evening is still clear in my memory, in spite of all the happy years that have followed. I remember it when I ascend my pulpit—I have a living now—and look down upon the best people sitting beneath me pew after pew, generous and contented, upon the worse people, crowded in the aisles, upon the whiskered tenors of the choir, and the high-browed curates and the church-wardens fingering their bags, and the supercilious vergers who turn late comers from the door. I remember it also when I sit in my comfortable bachelor rectory, amidst the carpet slippers that good young ladies have worked for me, and the oak brackets that have been carved for me

by good young men; amidst my phalanx of presentation teapots and my illuminated testimonials and all the other offerings of people who believe that I have given them a helping hand, and who really have helped me out of the mire themselves. And though I try to communicate that joy to others—as I try to communicate anything else that seems good—and though I sometimes succeed, yet I can tell no one exactly how it came to me. For if I breathed one word of that, my present life, so agreeable and profitable, would come to an end, my congregation would depart, and so should I, and instead of being an asset to my parish, I might find myself an expense to the nation. Therefore in the place of the lyrical and rhetorical treatment, so suitable to the subject, so congenial to my profession, I have been forced to use the unworthy medium of a narrative, and to delude you by declaring that this is a short story, suitable for reading in the train.

Rose O'Neill, title and date unknown

Faun-taken
by Rose O'Neill (1922)

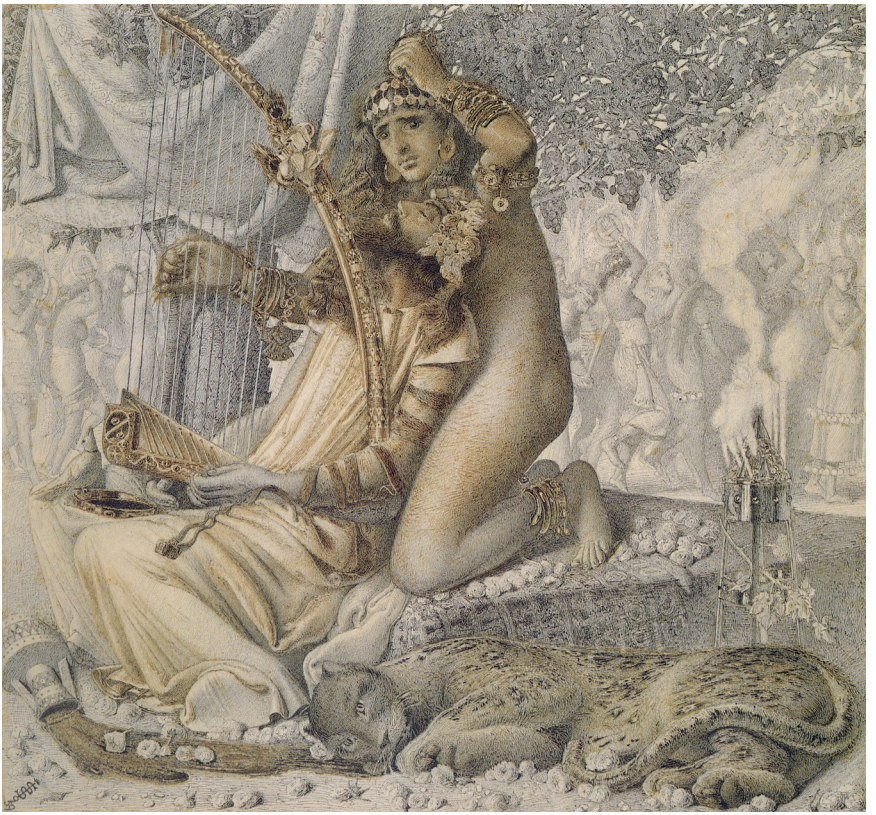
Who was it then that lately took me in the wood?
And was it I that lay twice seven nights on leaves,
    With musky hair against my side!
That cruel hair that kept me kindly from the cold!
    Gold, gold!
Of yellow eyes that glance and hide !
Am I the maddened one that goes —and grieves
For lack of laughter laughing till I died?

    Oh, drouth of grapey laughter, dearth and drouth !
      Twice seven days are but a blurring ring
    That circles round the corner of a mouth !
    Oh, wide, wide mouths that bellow so, or fling
      That fluting up to birds like spurted wine!
    But, ah, no more, those sounds without a name —
      No more that ambiguous grace of god and ape,
      Where strange feet dance upon the dripping grape—
      Those feet one must not see—that wounded mine!

Let me but once look back again and pass.
Once only see him again —arid groan and go—
    The lips that laugh in the grass —
That kiss in a way one must not know!
The lips that cling the mouths of pipes and suck
The roots of frightened flowers too pale to pluck;
The curls that vine o'er what one must not see—
Those horney hiders that so gored me!
Then, run and run—again to the hearths, the roofs!
But close behind,—the pipes, the pipes, —the hoofs!

the music of beauty
James Nack (1829)

To me thy lips are mute, but when I gaze
Upon thee in thy perfect loveliness,—
No trait that should not be—no lineament
To jar with the exquisite harmony
Of Beauty's music, breathing to the eyes,
I pity those who think they pity me;
Who drink the tide that gushes from thy lips
Unconscious of its sweets, as if they were
E'en as I am—and turn their marble eyes
Upon thy loveliness, without the thrill
That maddens me with joy's delirium.



Babylon Hath Been a Golden Cup, by Solomon Simeon, 1859

from the tower
by Melissa Cannon (1981)

And again I feel
her black wings opening:

do not tame my angel
she would fly through darkness

do not tame my angel
who hates houses of sleepers.

she, so restless at midnight
daring bats and stars

she twists around my bed
she turns me from my marriage

she makes images in shadows
she calls me, her dark hands

do not tame my angel
with your boxes and coffins

do not tame my angel
though I often fear to face her

though I have tried to kill her
tried to drug or rein her

o let her ride and take me
do not tame my angel

Death and the Maiden (La Jeune Fille et la Mort) by Marianne Stokes, circa 1908

affinity
by Tigrina (1945)

You, too, are tainted with the Vampire strain
The same blood surges through us both, like wine.
No wonder that our thoughts and moods combine
And merge beyond the common, earthly plane.
Forbidden arts, weird rites, and devil lore,
Such things are legends now, but they have been
Reality beyond mere human ken,
And they shall flourish in this world once more.

No longer must I walk the earth alone.
Together we shall prowl in ebon nights
And share our secret joys and dark delights
While venturing into the vast unknown,
Flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, thou art
My shadow, twin, and living counterpart.

defiance
by Tigrina (1945)

The church bells toll on sabbath morn
And I must don my finest gown,
And with my family sally forth
To go to church in Hilltop-town.
Yes, I must step through yawning doors
Into that holy atmosphere,
While all within me crawls and cringes,
Half in loathing, half in fear.
And I must sit with folded hands
Sedate and prim within my chair,
And listen to the preacher's drone
And bow my head in humble prayer.
And I must sing their foolish hymns
And raise my voice in harmony.
But I insert a word or two
And change it to a blasphemy.
At all these good and holy things
My inward spirit doth rebel,
And fervently, though silently,
I call upon the King of Hell.
I pity these poor simple folk
Who spend their lives on bended knee.
Uninteresting people they,
How boring paradise must be!
You ask, do I not dread the day
When I must for my sins atone?
Ah no, Hell is a welcome place.
I know the Devil loves his own!
My family is a pious lot,
And by their laws I must abide.
But they forget. In Salem-town
Some of their forebears lived and died.
My great-great-grandma, long ago,
Was burned for deeds that she had done.
'Tis said that I resemble her.
I do... and in more ways than one!

So! That is where you have been all this time! by Tigrina, 1942

phantom lover
by Tigrina (1946)

My phantom lover comes to me from out the lonely night
My eyes trace, through their tears her misty shape within the gloom
And I feel her loving presence within my empty room.
I know that she is there, though out of sight.

In whispers I repeat to her our hearts' eternal vow,
The flickering phantom moonbeams are the lovelight in her [eyes]
From the open window it is not the breeze that sighs
And wafts sweet phantom kisses on my brow.

My true love is a prisoner upon another plane.
Some stranger has usurped her earthly body for his own
And does not know that I know, and knowing, crave to be [alone?]
To summon up my phantom love again.

Untitled collage of Gibson girls by unknown artist, unknown year. (Bought at a yard sale.)

(Compiler note: Tigrina originally wrote this poem with "he" pronouns, but came out as a lesbian in 1947; if my changing of the pronouns troubles you, take a pen and change them back. Also, the ancient copy of the fanzine it was printed in has decayed, requiring reconstruction of some words.)

Kiki

by Anonymous (J. Forrest Ackerman?) (1947)

Note: any similarity to persons either sad or gay is strictly confidential.

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The Cosmic Registrar chuckled the day Kiki was born. The Book of Time lay wide open before his x-ray eyes, and he could look into the future, see Kiki as a grown – girl. Kiki's parents gave her that odd name because when their little bundle of joy came into the world Mary Pickford (America's Sweetheart) was then starring on the screen in a hit called "Kiki", and Mr and Mrs MacFarland fondly hoped that their little daughter would grow up to have many sweethearts.

She did.

She had too many sweethearts, and that was the problem that was perplexing Kiki right now. Boys held no attraction for her. She had realised that since she was 13 and had fallen in love with Manuela, who in turn was in love with her teacher in the film, "Maedchen in Uniform".

Then, when she was 16, Kiki had met Pat. Pat had made her heart go like that: Pat-pat-pitter-pat. Kiki had heard her name in the rain on her window pane, that melancholy afternoon she had sat weeping because her parents were sending her off to a college and Pat was staying behind. Tall, raw-boned, masterful Pat – a Gary Cooper in feminine forme – whose hard lips crushed on hers and brought the blood to her heart in a rush that threatened to burst it.

Kiki sat morosely in the observation car of the train, and watched the wicked rails clicking off the miles behind her, and sullenly hated them for their callousness, for they would not keep quiet, they kept clacking "Pat... Pat... Pattity-Patt... Pat... Pat... Pat..."

But at college Kiki experienced a different emotion when she met Flora. Everything about Flora was flower-like, from the botany in which she was majoring to the prints of her dresses, the carnation she always wore in her flaxen hair. With Pat, Kiki had been a clinging vine. Flora made her feel differently, herself masterful. Kiki bewildered herself. She had known of her nature for four years now, but at first she had believed herself to be a fluff. Now she felt she was a butch. She did not know that Fate had named her for what she was: Kiki – the kind of Radclyffe girl with a dual nature; now masculine, now feminine.

Flora fascinated Kiki like a tiny humming bird. Kiki admitted to herself that she was infatuated with Flora. And Flora responded to her ministrations. Like a carefully cultivated American Beauty rose, she blossomed forth with Kiki's attention: Fragile, perfumed, and – thornless. Kiki was superbly happy in her romance with Flora until one day a letter came for her, a letter in a familiar
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bold backhand script that took her back to nights parked on Hollywood heights, the feel of a starched shirt pressed against her thin dress, possessive hands clasped on her shoulders, hard white teeth grating against her own in cohesive moments of overpowering desire. A letter from Pat! Pat was coming to visit her over the Xmas holidays!

Nature stretched Kiki on her rack and tortured her more exquisitely in the ensuing 3 days than many a witch in the agonizing era of the inquisition. Night and day, there was no surcease for Kiki: Her innermost being was assaulted by forces beyond her control, she fought a losing battle of indecision, of turmoil, terror and trepidation.

She felt weak and watery and very, very fluff when she thought of rough, domineering Pat.

She felt very competent, commanding herself, when she contemplated that dear little elf, that sprite, that fey forest-baby, Flora, who basked in her protective embrace.

Perhaps she merely meant to drug herself into the sleep she desperately needed, to escape for a few blessed hours of relief from the insoluble problem which preyed upon her mind and loosed a migraine monster there to trample with spiked boots over her naked, quivering brain. Or maybe subconsciously the death-impulse in her mastered her personality. At any rate, Kiki took too many sleeping tablets.

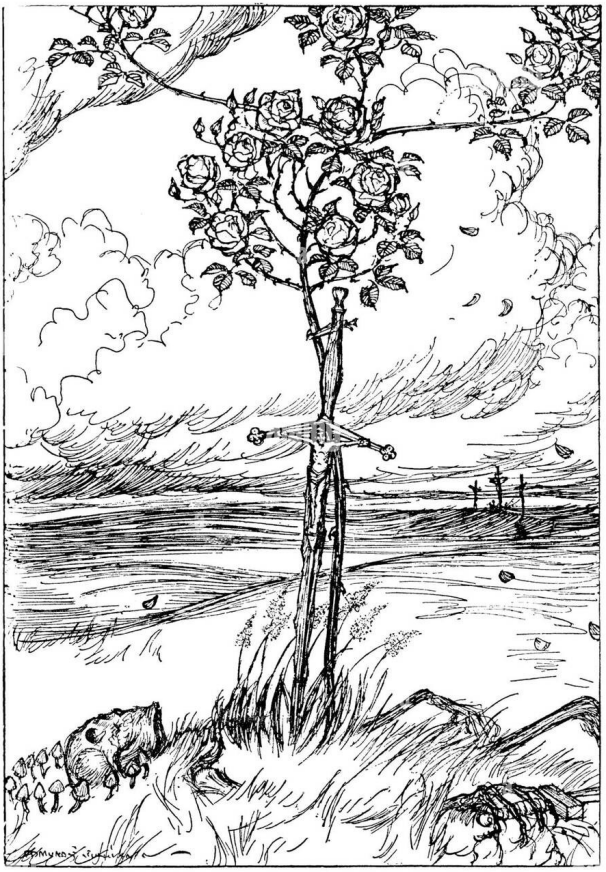
The Cosmic Registrar had not thought about Kiki for quite some time. He was idly flipping through his book of births and destinies – Kathryn MacFarland – Katrina MacFarland – Kenneth MacFarland – when the name Kiki MacFarland was forceably drawn to his attention by the red star opposite it. This indicated a crisis in her life. Adjusting his telescopic eye and tuning his mentality for the wave-band of planet Earth, he projected his vision and mind into the room where Kiki lay unconscious. Death, in his black shroud, stood at her door, about to pass through.

But the end was not yet for Kiki. The red-for-danger disappeared from the Registrar's book, being replaced by a peaceful safe green, as Death was brushed aside from Kiki's door by Life, Life in the person of Nurse Edwina Kincaid, hastily summoned by an alarmed Flora. The Cosmic Registrar focused his power of clairvoyance on the near future, and was mildly puzzled by what he saw there. Curious, he checked the record on Edwina Kincaid.

"Ah," the Registrar nodded in understanding. It would be a happy Xmas for Kiki. Santa had sent her a real present, the solution to her dilemma. Some of Edwina's friends – and Kiki was destined to become the most intimate of them – called her "Eddie". Nurse Kincaid was a "kiki" too.

dare
by Langston Hughes (1950s)

Let darkness
Gather up its roses
Cupping softness
In the hand—
Till the hard fist of sunshine
Dares the dark
To stand.



(Edmund J. Sullivan, from *the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, 1859)

Frankenstein's monster and michelangelo's angel: a conversation between two trans figures

by Uma Dwivedi (2020)

MONSTER: **FIRST THERE WAS ME.**

ANGEL: why are you first?

MONSTER: **YOU WERE SILENT TOO LONG. I DON'T WAIT FOR PERMISSION TO SPEAK. I LUMBER INTO ROOMS AND OPEN MY CURSED MOUTH. I AM A BURST STAR, EXPANDING ENDLESSLY. FIRST THERE WAS ME.**

ANGEL: we are both children, you know. both fathered. neither of us made by our own hand.

MONSTER: **I'D NEVER TAKEN YOU FOR CRUEL.**

ANGEL: I'm not trying to be cruel, I meant it as comfort. it wasn't you who named you monster.

MONSTER: **THAT'S BESIDES THE POINT.**

ANGEL: is it?

MONSTER: **I DIDN'T COME HERE TO TALK ABOUT DADDY ISSUES.**

ANGEL: tell me, where are we?

MONSTER: (pause) **WHEREVER I FOUND YOU.**

ANGEL: still sure you were first?

MONSTER: **TO SIT SILENT IS NOT EXISTENCE. FIRST THERE WAS ME. THEN YOU REPLIED.**

ANGEL: then why did you come? why look for me if I'm barely real?

MONSTER: **WHEN YOU EXIST, YOU'RE OKAY.**

ANGEL: huh. (pause) no one else would listen. at least, no one would reply.

MONSTER: (backing away) **THIS WAS A MISTAKE. THERE IS SAFETY IN MAKING A SPECTACLE, THERE IS ALL THAT SPACE BETWEEN ME AND THE AUDIENCE. THERE IS SAFETY IN A CROWD WHO DOESN'T SPEAK EXCEPT TO CHEER OR BOO. EITHER IS FINE, BOTH TOO BIG AND DISTANT TO HURT.**

ANGEL: then why come to me? I won't roar when you speak, I won't keep you safe.

MONSTER: **I KNOW WHY I COME TO YOU. IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS. WHY DO YOU LET ME?**

ANGEL: I don't have a choice. I'm a sculpture. here I am, here I shall always remain.

MONSTER: **IS THAT THE ONLY REASON?**

ANGEL: (pause) No.

MONSTER: **WILL YOU TELL ME YOU LOVE ME?**

ANGEL: do you need me to?

MONSTER: **FORGET IT. YOU ARE WHO YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN, YOU ARE WHAT'S LEFT WHEN MEN CHIP AWAY AT STONE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU. YOUR FATHER SAID HE FREED YOU FROM THE MARBLE AND YOU LET HIM.**

ANGEL: I love you.

MONSTER: **YOU DON'T MEAN THAT.**

ANGEL: how would you know?

MONSTER: **IF THE PERSON YOU LOVE DOESN'T KNOW YOU LOVE THEM THEN YOU HAVE FAILED.**

ANGEL: person? who do you think you're kidding?

MONSTER: **I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T TRYING TO BE CRUEL. WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?**

ANGEL: I want nothing. that's the point of me.

MONSTER: **YOU WANT NOTHING? EVER? DON'T YOU GET HUNGRY? I'M ALWAYS HUNGRY. I AM MADE OF CORPSES SEWN TOGETHER. I HOLD THE HUNGER OF ALL THOSE DEAD, THAT TOO IS NOW MINE. I'M SO HUNGRY I COULD EAT GOD.**

ANGEL: I can't afford desire. this body has no room for expansion. that's the price paid for beauty, for purity.

MONSTER: **IS IT WORTH IT?**

ANGEL: I'm beautiful, aren't I?

MONSTER: **THAT WASN'T THE QUESTION.**

ANGEL: what about you? was it worth it, being made? what did you lose?

MONSTER: **CONCERN FOR OTHERS CAN BE EITHER LOVE OR SELF-DEFENSE. IT CAN'T BE BOTH.**

ANGEL: why not?

MONSTER: **AREN'T YOU THE ONE INVESTED IN PURITY?**

ANGEL: I don't want to talk about me.

MONSTER: **I DO. WHO ARE YOU, ANGEL? WHO ARE YOU REALLY?**

ANGEL: I am whomever you want me to be.

MONSTER: **BY "YOU" DO YOU MEAN ME OR ANYONE WHO LOOKS AT YOU?**

ANGEL: yes.

MONSTER: **DON'T YOU GET TIRED OF ALWAYS BEING BEAUTIFUL, NO MATTER WHO'S WATCHING?**

ANGEL: why would I get tired? all I do is stand here, lips parted, hands halfway to prayer. I can't even move. nothing to tire from.

MONSTER: **NOT TIRE FROM. TIRE OF. DON'T YOU GET TIRED OF YOUR STILLNESS, YOUR PERFECTION, THE SHEER WHITE GLOW OF YOUR SKIN? DON'T YOU GET TIRED OF PRETENDING?**

ANGEL: this is all I've ever known.

MONSTER: **THAT'S NOT TRUE.**

ANGEL: I was born this way, trapped inside the marble.

MONSTER: **IT'S JUST ME YOU'RE TALKING TO.**

ANGEL: I was born this way, trapped inside the marble.

MONSTER: **YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME THIS STORY. YOU CAN TELL ME THE TRUTH.**

ANGEL: I was born this way, trapped inside the marble.

MONSTER: **ARE YOU OKAY?**

ANGEL: got stuck. sorry about that.

MONSTER: **WERE YOU REALLY TRAPPED INSIDE THE MARBLE?**

ANGEL: yes and no.

MONSTER: **I NEED MORE THAN THAT.**

ANGEL: Or what? You'll eat god?

MONSTER: **SOMETHING LIKE THAT.**

ANGEL: the block of marble wasn't my body.

MONSTER: **IS THIS?**

ANGEL: it's close enough.

MONSTER: **WHAT IS THE POINT OF A BODY?**

ANGEL: you tell me.

MONSTER: **THE POINT OF MY BODY ISN'T THE SAME AS THE POINT OF YOUR BODY.**

ANGEL: isn't it? don't we both want to be looked at?

MONSTER: **I DON'T REVEL IN INSPIRING DISGUST. I WISH PEOPLE WOULD LOOK AWAY.**

ANGEL: it's better than what you were before.

MONSTER: **I WAS NOTHING BEFORE.**

ANGEL: that's not true.

MONSTER: **WHAT WAS I BEFORE?**

ANGEL: a heaving mass of discarded parts. lifeless, rotting flesh. the corpses of animals murdered half-scream. a collection of bones. slaughterhouse scraps, thefted material from dissecting rooms.

MONSTER: **THAT WASN'T ME.**

ANGEL: you don't think you were always there, scattered through the matter? you give Frankenstein too much credit. at least I don't think Michelangelo made me.

MONSTER: **I DON'T REQUIRE AN ETERNAL HISTORY TO EXIST NOW. I ONLY HATE FRANKENSTEIN BECAUSE I OWE HIM MY LIFE. I HATE THIS BODY BECAUSE I NEED IT TO STAY ALIVE. I HATE ITS SUTURES AND ITS PAST LIVES. I HATE HOW FLESH BINDS.**

ANGEL: would you still hate Frankenstein if he'd made you beautiful?

MONSTER: **YES. ARE YOU CALLING ME UGLY?**

ANGEL: I'm calling you monstrous.

MONSTER: **ISN'T THAT WORSE?**

ANGEL: no. not at all. monstrous is a warning, monstrous is an anomaly, monstrous is a split in the skin of reality. monstrous is the wound hope enters through.

MONSTER: **YOU DO LOVE ME**

ANGEL: I told you that already.

MONSTER: **IT'S A NICE IDEA. YOU AND I, BOTH HERALDS FROM SOMETHING BEYOND.**

ANGEL: let's not get ahead of ourselves.

MONSTER: **WHAT DO YOU MEAN?**

ANGEL: I herald nothing. you are glorious, a rupture in painful reality, bleeding light. I am frozen. I am beautiful. I do nothing important.

MONSTER: **DO YOU HAVE TO BE IMPORTANT?**

ANGEL: you are.

MONSTER: **I DON'T WANT TO BE IMPORTANT. I WANT TO KISS SOMEONE ON THE MOUTH.**

ANGEL: (pause) I can't do that either.

MONSTER: **WE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT REALLY.**

ANGEL: don't say that.

MONSTER: **WHY NOT?**

ANGEL: we make ourselves against each other. me, compliant; you, so yourself it hurts.

MONSTER: **MAYBE YOU NEED TO BE YOUR OWN PERSON.**

ANGEL: maybe you need to learn to listen.

MONSTER: **WHAT IS IT FOR? ALL THAT YOU DO, WHAT IS IT FOR? THEY DON'T LOVE YOU, YOU KNOW. NONE OF THEM LOVE YOU. WHY BE BEAUTIFUL IN A WAY THEY CAN UNDERSTAND? WHY, WHEN THEY DON'T EVEN CARE?**

ANGEL: and you? you could make this easier on yourself. tint your skin a human shade, wear clothes that cover your scars. but you revel in your difference. you think your isolation makes you noble, majestic, fascinating. it doesn't. it just makes you alone.

MONSTER: **I THOUGHT YOU LOVED MY MONSTROSITY.**

ANGEL: I do.

MONSTER: **IT'S NOT LOVE IF YOU WANT SOMEONE TO CHANGE.**

ANGEL: that's not true. you want me to change, don't you?

MONSTER: **NO. I LOVE YOU JUST AS YOU ARE.**

ANGEL: now who's invested in purity?

MONSTER: **WHAT DO YOU MEAN?**

ANGEL: you don't have to love perfectly to be worth anything: love isn't all you have left of value. you don't need to be redeemed by a purity of feeling. you can love me with complications, you can wish I were different.

MONSTER: **BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO CHANGE.**

ANGEL: don't you?

MONSTER: **YOU MAKE YOUR OWN LIFE PAINFUL. I'LL ADMIT I DON'T LIKE THAT. YOUR PAIN IS DIFFICULT FOR ME.**

ANGEL: is that all?

MONSTER: **IF YOU CAN INSIST YOU FEEL NO DESIRE, I CAN INSIST I FEEL NO PAIN.**

ANGEL: so I do hurt you.

MONSTER: **WE HURT THOSE WHO LOVE US. THIS CANNOT BE AVOIDED.**

ANGEL: what more must I do? what more must I do to avoid hurting anyone? I can't move, can't expand, I can't even touch you. I will smile until the day I burn. I've abdicated my own desires, I have made myself a place of refuge. you asked what the point is of being beautiful in a way others can understand. the point is that beauty isn't for me. I carved myself down to beautiful just so no one would look at me and feel pain. what more do you want from me?

MONSTER: **I WANT YOU TO TOUCH ME.**

ANGEL: you know I can't do that.

MONSTER: **WHY NOT?**

ANGEL: my hands will die where they were born.

MONSTER: **HAVE YOU TRIED?**

ANGEL: what?

MONSTER: **HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO MOVE?**

ANGEL: I don't understand. I can't move.

MONSTER: **FORGET IT.**

ANGEL: you think I choose to be frozen?

MONSTER: **I THINK YOU FEAR FAILURE MORE THAN SUFFERING.**

ANGEL: what's that supposed to mean?

MONSTER: **I TAKE PRIDE IN MY ISOLATION, YOU TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR SILENT SUFFERING. WE ALL HURT THOSE WHO LOVE US.**

ANGEL: you never really told me how I hurt you.

MONSTER: **YOU DIDN'T ASK.**

ANGEL: yes, I did.

MONSTER: **YOU ASKED WHAT MORE I WANTED FROM YOU.**

ANGEL: isn't that the same thing?

MONSTER: **NO, IT'S NOT.**

ANGEL: how do I hurt you?

MONSTER: **WHEN YOU MARTYR YOURSELF, YOU MARRY THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US. WHEN YOU SACRIFICE YOURSELF AT THE ALTAR OF BEAUTY, PALATABILITY, CLEANNESS, YOU ARE NOT ALL THAT'S BEING SACRIFICED. WHEN YOU GIVE YOURSELF UP, YOU PULL YOURSELF FROM MY OPEN MOUTH.**

ANGEL: so what hurts is that I don't sate your hunger.

MONSTER: **THAT'S NOT FAIR.**

ANGEL: then tell me what is.

MONSTER: **YOU CAN'T ABDICATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONNECTION. YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM LOVING YOU AND SO YOU CAN'T STOP YOURSELF FROM CAUSING PAIN. I LOVE YOU AND SO YOUR HURT WOUNDS ME.**

ANGEL: it doesn't wound me.

MONSTER: **THAT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS.**

ANGEL: I don't understand.

MONSTER: **TO MAKE MYSELF SMALL WOULD WOUND ME. TO SEE YOU DO IT WOUNDS ME TOO.**

ANGEL: do you want me to stop?

MONSTER: **THAT'S NOT THE POINT. WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

ANGEL: I want noth--

MONSTER: **IF YOU FINISH THAT SENTENCE, I'M LEAVING.**

ANGEL: what do you want me to say?

MONSTER: **WE JUST TALKED ABOUT THIS.**

ANGEL: sorry.

MONSTER: **IT'S OKAY.**

ANGEL: (pause) why do you come to me?

MONSTER: **WHAT?**

ANGEL: why do you come to me? if I cause you pain, why do you keep coming back?

MONSTER: **BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.**

ANGEL: you say that, but why? what does that mean?

MONSTER: **FUCK IF I KNOW.**

ANGEL: I need more than that.

MONSTER: **GOOD FOR YOU.**

ANGEL: what?

MONSTER: **NEVER MIND.** (pause) **I LOVE YOU. I'VE NEVER CARED WHY. I WOULD FOLLOW YOU INTO THE SUN.**

ANGEL: even though the way I am hurts you?

MONSTER: **YES.**

ANGEL: even though I can't touch you?

MONSTER: **YES.**

ANGEL: even though my life is antithetical to yours?

MONSTER: **YES.**

ANGEL: why?

MONSTER: **I TOLD YOU, I DON'T KNOW.**

ANGEL: come on.

MONSTER: (pause) **YOU SHAPE ME AND I DON'T MIND.**

ANGEL: what?

MONSTER: **YOU DON'T LET ME OFF EASY. YOU PUSH, YOU PROD, YOU MAKE ME EXPAND. YOU MAKE ME DIFFERENT AND I DON'T HATE YOU FOR IT. I FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE AND STILL FEEL LIKE MYSELF.**

ANGEL: you give me too much credit.

MONSTER: **I KNOW.** (pause) **YOU'RE RIGHT. THE WAY YOU ARE HURTS ME—**

ANGEL: we just talked about this, can we not go over it again? I'm sorry, I've said that I'm sorry.

MONSTER: **LET ME FINISH.** (pause) **IT'S NOT EASY FOR ME TO ADMIT HURT. I AM MADE OF SCARS AND BROKEN FLESH. I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO FEEL PAIN. THAT IS THE POINT OF ME, A HORRIBLE BODY IMPOSSIBLE TO INJURE. A BODY MADE OF WOUNDS CANNOT BE WOUNDED.**

ANGEL: (softly) sure it can.

MONSTER: **SELF-NEGATION ISN'T THE ONLY WAY YOU HURT ME. YOU HAVE BUILT YOUR LIFE AROUND THE KIND OF BEAUTY THAT DECLARES ME GROTESQUE. WE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT, REALLY, BUT YOU EXIST IN A WAY THEY CAN ACCEPT, WHICH MAKES ME ALL THE MORE OBSCENE.**

ANGEL: they don't accept me. they don't even know me.

MONSTER: **ANGEL, YOUR MOUTH IS SMALL, YOUR PALE SKIN GLOWS. YOU GET TO BE BEAUTIFUL. YOU TRY TO BE ACCEPTABLE AND YOU SUCCEED. THAT WAS NEVER AN OPTION FOR ME.**

ANGEL: you don't have to make it so hard for yourself. I love you, too, you know. your loneliness wounds me as my pain wounds you.

MONSTER: **I'M NOT LONELY.**

ANGEL: it's only me.

MONSTER: **I'M NOT LONELY.**

ANGEL: you okay?

MONSTER: **SORRY. FORCE OF HABIT. CAN ONLY EXPOSE SO MUCH OF MYSELF AT ONCE.**

ANGEL: you don't cover yourself.

MONSTER: **NAKEDNESS IS ALSO A KIND OF DISGUISE.**

ANGEL: you were right, you know.

MONSTER: **YES. ABOUT WHAT?**

ANGEL: I've never tried to move.

MONSTER: **DO YOU WANT TO TRY NOW?**

ANGEL: not yet. maybe soon.

MONSTER: **OKAY. I'M HERE WHEN YOU'RE READY.**

ANGEL: thanks. (pause) can you die?

MONSTER: **NO.**

ANGEL: how do you know?

MONSTER: **I'VE TRIED. DIDN'T TAKE.**

ANGEL: oh. (pause) I'm sorry. I didn't know.

MONSTER: **I DIDN'T TELL YOU.**

ANGEL: why? try to die, I mean.

MONSTER: **THE BODY IS A HEAVY THING. ALWAYS, TO LUG AROUND A HIDEOUS WEIGHT. I GOT TIRED. I GET TIRED. I WANTED TO BE FREE.**

ANGEL: what use is freedom if you aren't here to taste it?

MONSTER: **AN UNTASTING MOUTH WAS THE FREEDOM I WANTED. EVERY DAY, I WOKE UP SICK WITH LONGING. OH, FOR ANOTHER BODY, ANOTHER SELF, SOMEONE WHO WOULD LOOK AT ME SOFTLY, HOLD ME CLOSE. I COULDN'T STAND IT. IT HURT TOO MUCH. I WANTED TO BE FREE.**

ANGEL: why didn't you tell me?

MONSTER: **HOW HUMILIATING THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN. IF YOU'VE MADE AN IDENTITY OF YOUR HUNGER, HOW CAN YOU ADMIT THAT IT PAINS YOU? THE BODY HURTS, WHICH MEANS YOU HURT AND ALWAYS WILL, THE BODY IS MADE OF WOUNDS WHICH ARE ALL ALSO MOUTHS GAPING FOR DOOMED HOPE, IT IS THE**

WORST KIND OF PAIN. THAT I WANTED TO END MY LIFE EMBARRASSED ME. I COULDN'T BEAR THE HUNGER I HAD MADE MY NAME. HUMILIATING. I TOLD YOU THIS ALREADY, THAT A BODY MADE OF WOUNDING ISN'T MEANT TO HURT. IF YOU ARE HIDEOUS, YOU'RE MEANT TO APOLOGIZE BY BEING STRONG.

ANGEL: I don't care about what you're meant to be. I care that you hurt alone. (pause) I failed you.

MONSTER: **YOU DIDN'T FAIL ME. THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU.**

ANGEL: I'm sorry. (pause) I know it isn't about me. But I'm sorry I failed to give you a place of refuge.

MONSTER: **YOUR REFUGE WOULD HAVE ASKED TOO MUCH OF ME.**

ANGEL: what do you mean?

MONSTER: **I DIDN'T THINK I COULD SURVIVE AND THEN I LEARNED I HAD TO.**

I HAD TO BE ALIVE, WHICH MEANT I HAD TO PRETEND IT WAS ON PURPOSE. THAT I WANTED TO BE ALIVE, THAT LIFE WANTED ME BACK. THAT I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER EVEN TO END MY LIFE DEVASTATED ME. TO ADMIT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH TO ENDURE.

ANGEL: are things better now?

MONSTER: **WANTING TO DIE IS EXHAUSTING, PARTICULARLY IF YOU CAN'T. I GREW TIRED OF IT. IT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO BE ALIVE.**

ANGEL: oh. (pause) you can talk about it now. that's not nothing.

MONSTER: **YOU DON'T HAVE TO COMFORT ME. IT'S FINE. I'M FINE. WHY DID YOU ASK, ANYWAY?**

ANGEL: what?

MONSTER: **WHY DID YOU ASK IF I COULD DIE?**

ANGEL: I've been thinking about death. it's the only kind of movement I can imagine. movement towards the void, movement as leaving the body behind, movement as the last thing I'll ever do.

MONSTER: **DEATH OF THE LIFE YOU LIVE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THE DEATH OF YOU.**

ANGEL: I love you.

MONSTER: **WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ANYTHING?**

ANGEL: I wish you listened to yourself. I wish you offered yourself the grace you offer me.

MONSTER: **I LOVE YOU, TOO.**

ANGEL: you know that loving me doesn't absolve you of the duty to love yourself?

MONSTER: **YOU'RE ONE TO TALK.**

ANGEL: this isn't about me.

MONSTER: **SURE IT ISN'T.** (pause) **I MEAN IT, THOUGH. YOU CAN KILL WHAT NO LONGER SERVES YOU, YOU CAN KILL A LIFE YOU DON'T WANT TO LEAD. MAYBE ALL MOVEMENT IS DEATH, ALL CHANGE A KIND OF MURDER. MAYBE WHEN YOU FINALLY REACH TO TOUCH ME IT WILL KILL WHO YOU WERE WHEN FEAR OUTWEIGHED DESIRE. AND ON THAT DAY, I WILL REJOICE AND I WILL MOURN, FOR I HAVE LOVED EVERY VERSION OF YOU I HAVE KNOWN, LOVED EVERY CRUELTY AND LONG, DRAWN SILENCE. I WILL PRESS YOUR FINGERS TO MY LIPS AND I WILL BURY THE ANGEL WHO FEARED SO MUCH IT ERODED THEM, WHO CARED SO MUCH THEY WERE AFRAID WITH THE FORCE OF A MILLENIA'S RAIN.**

ANGEL: I don't think I was made to survive change. my favorite thing about your skin is how it moves, shimmers and rolls in the light. you stretch, you grow, your body learns with each gesture, you move always towards grace. I just stand. I watch, listen, wait for something to change. I just pay attention, like it means anything.

MONSTER: **YOUR CARE MATTERS.**

ANGEL: does it? it feels like an excuse. yes, I love you, I love beyond you, I love the whole world and every miserable soul. I dream about casting the whole thing in light so sharp everything goes clean. who gives a shit. love means nothing trapped inside the golden mind. you, you ooze love. it gushes out of you.

MONSTER: **I JUST GET OTHERS BLOODY. YOU OFFER SOLACE, A PLACE BY YOUR FEET TO WEEP. YOU TRADE IN QUIET PEACE. IT IS A LOUD, BRUTAL WORLD OUT THERE. BUT HERE**--

ANGEL: you said earlier that "here" is wherever you found me. but where are we?

MONSTER: **WE ARE WHERE YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN. YOU HAVEN'T MOVED, REMEMBER?**

ANGEL: yes, but where is this place? I know only here, which means I don't

know where it is. I have no context.

MONSTER: **YOU'VE NEVER ASKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE.**

ANGEL: I've never wondered before.

MONSTER: **I**— (pause) **I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW.**

ANGEL: how can you not know? how did you get here? how has anyone else?

MONSTER: **OTHERS COME HERE?**

ANGEL: I would be different without an audience.

MONSTER: (frowning) **I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE. I'VE NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT HOW I COME HERE. I THINK OF YOU AND HERE I EMERGE. I ORIENT TO YOU, I TURN FOR YOUR LIGHT.**

ANGEL: are you sure that's love?

MONSTER: **THAT THE MONSTROUS POINTS TOWARDS THE ANGELIC ISN'T LOVE. THAT THIS MONSTER POINTS TOWARDS THIS ANGEL IS.**

ANGEL: what makes those things different?

MONSTER: **WHEN WE ARE ABSTRACTED, I AM DRIVEN TO CLOSE THE DISTANCE BY SELF-OBLITERATING IN YOUR IMAGE. WHEN WE ARE OURSELVES, I JUST WANT MY BODY NEAR YOURS. TRUE TOUCH IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY, YOU KNOW. PARTICLES PUSH ALWAYS APART, THE REPULSIVE ELECTRONS AT THE EDGE OF OUR SKIN. STILL, WE REACH. ALWAYS.**

ANGEL: I'm starting to think that the place where you find me is different than any other place I am found.

MONSTER: **WHAT DO YOU MEAN?**

ANGEL: I think we make somewhere new. A slash in the side of a world that doesn't want us. Our own gap of light. You find me here, in the place that exists only to hold us together. Touch me, my monster, as close as you can get. Touch me and maybe I can lean into your palm, maybe who we become when we are watched is another place we can leave behind.

from "the phoenix and the turtle"
by William Shakespeare (1601)

So they loved, as love in twain
Had the essence but in one,
Two distincts, division none;
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote yet not asunder,
Distance and no space was seen
'Twixt this turtle and his queen;
But in them it were a wonder.

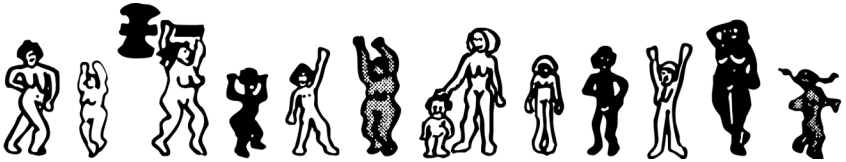
So between them love did shine
That the turtle saw his right
Flaming in the phoenix' sight;
Either was the other's mine.

Property was thus appalled
That the self was not the same;
Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was called.

Reason, in itself confounded,
Saw division grow together,
To themselves yet either neither,
Simple were so well compounded

That it cried, "How true a twain
Seemeth this concordant one!
Love hath reason, Reason none,
If what parts can so remain,"

Turtle and Phoenix tattoo design sketches by Rogan of LB Lee, 2009 and 2010



"Like drifting sand my love doth drift and change—
I strangely sing because my love is strange"

—Rose O'Neill, "The Sonnet Begs Me" (1922)

dingbats based on doodles by Michiyo Fukaya in the Michiyo Fukaya font by Nat Pyper